

LES VOYAGEURS DE LAVERENDRYE

Report on Summer 1974

## Preface

This report may be a somewhat more personal document than is usually expected in the Director's Report. It is first of all a report on the summer of '74 but more than that I hope it to be a kind of summing up. I've worked for Les Voyageurs since 1967 and now marriage and a career preclude spending another summer in LaVerendrye. Therefore besides reporting on last summer's activities I hope this report will give some sort of overview of where the camp has been and where I think it should go.

### I. The Brochure

Once again a plea must be made to make the Voyageur's handbook of information and especially any forms the parents must fill out bilingual. We deserve abominations like Bill 22 if we make no effort to translate into French simple things like lists of clothing and equipment to bring.

The staff felt the following things should be emphasized in the publicity brochure and the information handbook. I concur.

- a) that the clothing brought by campers need not be new. It merely needs to be in good condition.
- b) that the campers be asked to bring a minimum of five dollars for lunches coming to and from the Park.
- c) that raincoats be waterproof. The kids are still bringing frail plastic ponchos and suffer accordingly on rainy days.
- d) that there be a more precise description of the kind of bed-roll and groundsheet that should be bought. To wit: a compact down-filled bag: a correspondingly small rubberized-canvas groundsheet.
- e) that sunglasses be added to the "equipment to bring" list as an optional item. Bath towels can be taken off. !
- f) that more emphasis be put on the suggestion that they bring one or two paperback books to read.
- g) that if the campers are to still bring their own self-purchased paddles then the adjectives "strong", "wooden", and "wide" should be emphasized.

h) the general consensus was that the campers should be aware that they are not going to be pampered - i.e. that they should expect a fairly rough experience. We are still getting campers who think they are going to paddle around Lake Kanawana.

i) the information booklet should emphasize the parent's attendance at parent's night. Every parent should be phoned and personally invited.

## II. Policy

1. A set policy should be made about the physical size of campers. We are still getting small lads who whatever their attractions as persons do genuinely suffer because of the weight of the packs and of the canoes (even aluminum ones). What should be a pleasurable experience becomes cruel and unusual punishment. Moreover they feel some group hostility because they do not carry the same loads as their larger confreres. There is the special embarrassment of the light pack that has specially to be packed for them. The policy should be that the campers must be at least 100 pounds in weight and over five feet in height.

2. Some effort should be made to discover whether campers know what Voyageurs is and whether they want to come to the Park. Nothing is more disheartening than the camper who has been shanghaied by his parents and has not the slightest desire to be on a canoe trip. Each prospective camper should be interviewed by the director of the camp.

3. The optimum number of people on our canoe trips is six (one <sup>tripper</sup> and five campers) travelling in two canoes. A group of <sup>canoe</sup> that size is not unwieldy and <sup>can</sup> canoe and portage through the wilderness quickly and safely with a minimum of confusion. More than six is difficult because there are not enough activities to keep everyone busy. However the greatest difficulty is that with just one more camper than five you need another canoe just to bring along the extra person. The extra canoe slows down the trip and the load on portages cannot be divided evenly. Consider: with a trip of six people, two carry canoes while the food, bedrolls, and equipment is stuffed into four packs to be carried by the rest. But with a trip of seven three carry canoes and there are still only four packs which now must be overstuffed to carry the food and gear of seven people. The point of this is that the camp should make a policy of keeping the trips to five campers and stick to it no matter what the temptation of making a few extra bucks by adding one more camper to a trip. The revenue is not worth the problems that result from a seven-man trip. Last summer when I told a tripper that an extra camper had been added to his

trip his comment was, "They screwed us downtown". They did indeed.

4. The Voyageur Director if carefully chosen for his post should be trusted in his choice of staff and in his spending for food and equipment. A lack of confidence especially in the choosing of staff was perceived last summer from the Camping Director and this sometimes hampered my ability to get things done.

5. The Kanawana caretaker of last season was an able and hardworking individual who could not disguise his contempt for the Voyageurs Director and his staff. While the planning, preparation, and execution of a canoe trip does not fall into the category of backbreaking labour which in the ethic of the Caretaker can only be considered work, the trippers did do their jobs well. In no way did we deserve the unfriendliness and petty harassment that we got from the Caretaker. The requests from our outfit are minimal (hot showers and access to buildings) so that it mystifies me that a dislike for us of such intensity should have developed. But develop it did and to no small degree it spoiled our summer while we were at Kanawana. The Caretaker should be instructed to meet what few demands the Voyageur Director makes on him without petulance and these reasonable demands include the Director inspecting and repairing the Voyageur's equipment in May and June.

6. A reassessment of what trippers are paid is in order. The base salary for a tripper last summer was \$450. for the summer. That is the same as I got for my first summer back in 1967! We will not get good staff unless we are prepared to pay them well.

### III. Staff

The trippers for Summer '74 were superb. A more temperate, skilled, and competent staff there is not. I recommend without hesitation that should they want to return next summer that they be rehired.

Special mention should be made of Bob Woodhouse's resourcefulness in doing major repairs on a badly damaged canoe and still getting his trip back on schedule.

Evidence of the ability of the trippers is that every trip reached its pickup on time and there were no injuries all summer.

In choosing staff in the future I feel that while an applicant's tripping skills are crucial their counselling skills are just as important.

#### IV. Food

In general, everyone including the campers was pleased about the variety, quantity, and flavour of the food carried on the trips. I believe we have lowered the weight of the food carried on a trip to as low as is possible while still maintaining nutrition and variety. A number of new (for Voyageurs) products were used and what follows is mostly an evaluation of those products. The list of foods used is in the appendix.

- a) We tried both Salada Hot Chocolate in the individual serving packages and Gumpert's in the double serving bags. The choice was unanimous for Gumpert's because of its superior flavour and because its packaging withstood the rigors of a canoe trip. Salada's did not.
- b) Gumpert's Spanish Rice Dinner was tasty and a good base for stews. Again excellent packaging.
- c) Gumpert's dried peas and carrots mix we felt was even better than the freeze-dried variety besides being well packaged. Reorder.
- d) Since pure Grape Nuts (not the flakes) was not commercially available we substituted "Harvest Crunch" (Quaker) which met with universal acceptance.
- e) Praise was heaped on Schnieder's Dried Salamis which proved to be flavourful and, most important, almost indestructable. It's the only salami we have found that travels well without refrigeration. A couple should go with each trip. We found them at the deli in Fairview Mall in Pointe Claire. }
- f) We carried, for the first time, freeze-dried beef and pork patties. They were well packaged for travel. I personally thought the pork ones excellent and the beef ones woody but the trippers were enthusiastic about both kinds and want them next summer.
- g) Everyone agreed that the freeze-dried vegetables were good and that we should check to see if the company carries anything besides peas, corn, and green beans.
- h) Keep buying tinned kidney beans - with freeze-dried ground beef you have a good base for chili. }
- i) Do not buy jam and peanut butter. There is no bread to spread it on and much is wasted. ! aye
- j) Buy one tinned ham per trip. It's heavy but it travels O.K. and is a relief from the freeze-dried meats.

- k) Buy lots more dried soups - especially onion.
- l) The camp might supply some flour and yeast so that if a trip finds a cabin with a stove it can bake bread.
- m) Jeff Roberts thought we could have bought a higher quality raisin.
- n) It was agreed that the Salada "Rise 'n Shine" powdered fruit juices were good and traveled reasonably well. Also, unlike Gumpert's when you finish a package you can burn it instead of being left with a can for disposal. Besides a can is difficult to reseal once it is open while the foil lined bags are not.
- n) What Pezner's does not supply or <sup>does</sup> not have in stock can usually be purchased at Saffran's wholesale food warehouse (the dried salamis being an exception).

#### V. Canoes

We used-for the first time in Voyageur's history-aluminum canoes. This, I think, was a positive step. While the canoes are unappealing aesthetically they certainly are lighter and much more durable than the cedar strip variety. The savings in paint, varnish, canvas, wood, and glue needed for annual spring repairs to the cedars will be considerable as the years go by. We found that complaints about the noise and the hot gunwales of aluminum canoes were overblown. The gunwales never got more than warm and the packs muffled the noise of the water on the hull. We did not find them significantly harder to handle on windy days. However to carp:

- a) The deck plates should be painted a dull colour. Presently the sun reflecting on them can be blinding.
- b) There are some sharp edges on the gunwales and under the seats that should be taped or filed.
- c) The very indestructability of the aluminum canoes is to me their chief liability. There is a danger that some trippers might attempt rapids which otherwise they would not touch in a cedar canoe thus exposing their campers to unnecessary peril. Aluminum canoes mean that the camp must be especially discerning in who it hires as trippers. A reckless tripper and an aluminum canoe is a lethal combination.
- d) We should buy two more aluminum canoes and thus have a full complement.

## VI. Equipment

No one had any complaint about the availability and quality of the equipment we used. Our tents and packs seem best suited to the kind of operation we run. With the advent of aluminum canoes we had more time to devote to the preparation and repair of equipment. A lot of packs were repaired and the first aid boxes overhauled. About equipment there was general agreement on the following points:

- a) A good combination aluminum canoe repair-equipment repair kit (including needle and tentmaker's thread) should be assembled for each trip in a watertight container.
- b) The hunt should continue for a durable waterproof mapcase. (What does the Canadian Army Airbourne use?)
- c) The camp should supply tooth powder, a flashlight, spare batteries, and bathing soap for each trip. Presently each camper brings his own and since only one of each is carried on each trip a lot of parents are wasting money.
- d) Somebody should find a company that sells transparent plastic freezer bags (with ties) wholesale. We waste a lot of time and money running around all summer from store to store buying them retail.
- e) The following equipment needs to be purchased for summer '75:  
  
1 hickory axe handle  
4 map cases  
1 sail silk tent fly  
2 Woods tripper packs  
4 pot kit bags  
3 saw blades

## VII. The Future of Voyageurs

In recent years, principally because of its inability to afford a truck (and thus access a base camp) Les Voyageurs has based itself at Camp Kanawana with the following effects:

- a) The campers arrive "high" for the bush and spend their first day at a residence camp abounding with little girls and eight-year-old boys. Instead of their transition and training period being spent in a wilderness base camp they spend it at Kanawana with a resultant letdown. This is not to criticise Kanawana but it is certainly not

what the parents are paying for. More than one camper has told me that he felt the two days spent at Kanawana constituted a "ripoff". |

b) Because of all the travelling involved the Voyageurs summer has been made shorter so as not to interfere with Kanawana. Thus the result that we waste the best part of August.

c) Before camp Les Voyageur's schedule and its ability to have a staff training trip is hampered by its dependance on Kanawana's truck.

d) Without the base camp there is no opportunity to set up the camp in the environment in which we will work.

e) Les Voyageur's presence has resulted in conflict with Kanawana's caretaker and its campers are sometimes disruptive to the routine of Kanawana while they are there.

f) If things continue as they are now then Les Voyageurs de LaVerendrye will inevitably be absorbed by the Hike and Trip department of Kanawana and will cease to be a separate operation. The loss of a distinctive canoe tripping camp is something the YMCA can ill afford.

#### VIII. Conclusion

The very survival of Les Voyageurs is dependant on its acquiring a truck and consequently being able to use a base camp. A new base camp should not be in Parc de LaVerendrye. I say this with regret but the Park is becoming increasingly crowded, the fees more and more onerous, and the surrounding fishing clubs more and more touchy about trips crossing their territory. With all the new roads open to the James Bay Project (ugh) we should be able to find a new tripping territory that is both exciting and accessible and on which we can build a new base camp. It will take planning and initiative. The time to do it is now.

Respectfully submitted



Paul Mongraw  
Director 1974

APPENDIX ONE: FOOD USED SUMMER '74

oatmeal  
cream o' wheat  
Red River Cereal  
Harvest Crunch  
Salada Orange drink  
Salada Lemonade  
Salada Grape Drink  
Salada Apple Drink  
white sugar  
brown sugar  
jam  
peanut butter  
dried apricots  
dates  
raisins  
prunes  
sardines  
instant coffee  
corned beef  
tinned pork loaf (eg. Prem, Klik etc.)  
tinned cakes (Crosse and Blackwell Date Loaf)  
Gumpert's Spanish Rice Dinner  
Gumpert's Peas and Carrots mix  
Freeze-dried green beans  
Freeze-dried peas  
Freeze-dried corn kernal  
Gumpert's Hot Chocolate mix  
Baker's Semi-sweet chocolate (chunks)  
Lipton's dried onion soup  
Lipton's dried pea soup  
Lipton's dried chicken noodle soup  
Lipton's dried beef noodle soup  
tinned Kidney beans  
spaghetti  
tinned tomato paste  
tinned baked navy beans  
dried onion flakes  
Freeze-dried ground beef  
Freeze-dried beef patties  
Freeze-dried turkey chunks (U.S. army)  
dried mashed potatoes  
Freeze-dried pork patties  
rice  
macaroni  
flavouring mixes (French's chili, spaghetti sauce, cheese  
B.B.Q. sauce  
cooking oil  
milk powder  
honey (in tins)  
margarine  
dried salami  
Bisquick

APPENDIX TWO: INVENTORY OF SURPLUS FOOD SUMMER '74

10 bags Red River cereal  
11 bags cream o' wheat  
1 20 oz. box of cream o' wheat  
6 22 oz. bags of Rise 'n Shine Apple Drink  
6 22 oz. bags of Rise 'n Shine Lemonade  
1 2 lb. 4 oz. box of Freeze-dried peas  
2 bags of freeze-dried green beans  
1 case (6/ 1 lb. 12 oz. tins of freeze-dried turkey chunks  
1 tin ( 1 lb. 12 oz. tin of turkey chunks - freeze-dried  
7 6½ oz. Spanish Rice Dinners  
6 2 lb. boxes of rice  
8 1 lb. boxes of spaghetti  
4 bags freeze-dried potatoes  
4 cases (24 cans) freeze-dried potatoes  
6 cases (23 cans) freeze-dried macaroni  
2 1 lb. bags of Bisquick  
6 packages of dried soup mix (pea)  
63 tins sardines  
3 tins corned beef  
4 tins kidney beans  
4 10 oz. jars instant coffee  
2 12 oz. bottles of BBQ mix sause  
17 1 lb. boxes of powdered milk  
200 single serving salada hot chocolate  
10 lb. brown sugar  
35 lb. dates  
3 ib. raisins

## APPENDIX THREE: EQUIPMENT INVENTORY

### Quantity

5	six-man pot kits
7	frying pans
6	first aid kits
25	boxes of matches
5	packs in good repair (at bottom of box)
4	packs needing outside repairs (sent out)
14	packs needing inside repairs (on top of good packs)
4	pot scrubbers
6	pot bags
13	personal packs (small canvas knapsacks)
10	bars Sunlight soap
1 box	pack repair material (leather, buckles, stitching awl)
1 quart	spar varnish
$\frac{1}{2}$ quart	marine grade yellow paint
2	paint brushes
1	wire brush
	ambroid glue
2	assorted repair tape
3	tool boxes with assorted hardware and tools
3	rubber mallets
1	steel box of brass screws
1	screwing brace
1	spirit level
8 tins	Raid bug killer
8	coils of nylon rope (10' each)
6	bush saws with guards
5	axes with covers (one needs new handle)
$4\frac{1}{2}$	pairs of fire gloves
3	trenching shovels (one needs new handle)
3	nine man sail-silk tents
1	six man sail-silk tent
4	nine man tent flies
13	16 oz. plastic jars
4	12 oz. plastic jars
4	plastic seal-top bottles
30	melmac eating bowls
30	melmac cups
23	life preservers
5	spare paddles
	cutlery for 30 people
6	aluminum canoes
2	Chestnut cedar strip canoes

#### APPENDIX FOUR: FIRST AID SUPPLIES CARRIED

small tubes of antiseptic ointment (first aid cream)  
small tubes of ointment for burns, bug bites, poison ivy  
25 pill bottle of Gravol  
100 tablet bottles of Halazone  
tube of Lypsyl  
25 pill bottle of asperin  
12 tablet tube of 222's  
2 oz. bottle of Kaopectate  
3 packages of 3M suture strips (3 to a package)  
1 oral thermometer in case  
1 roll of adhesive tape ( $\frac{1}{2}$ " by 5 yards - J&J Dermicel)  
48 large bandaids  
1 Ace elastic bandage (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " width)  
sterile gauze pads (4" by 4" Steripads)  
sterile gauze pads (3" by 3" Steripads)  
tweezers  
small scissors  
box of (1" by 10 yd.) regular bandage  
box of (4" by 10 yd.) regular bandage  
eye pad in sterile package  
10 ml. bottle of Polysporin ear and eye drops  
safety pins  
salt tablets  
St. John Ambulance First Aid booklet  
dime for phone